STACK
ANNEX
5
014
093

fornia
nal
y

MOSES,

THE MAN AND STATESMAN.

A LECTURE

—BY—

REV. DR. ISAAC M. WISE.

MOSES,

THE MAN AND STATESMAN.

A LECTURE

Delivered in New York and Boston, January 23 and 25, 1883.

BY REV DR. ISAAC M. WISE.

BLOCH & CO., PUBLISHERS,
CINCINNATI.

Stack
Annex

5014093

MOSES, THE MAN AND STATESMAN.

GREAT men are the most instructive and most attractive text-books, whose paragraphs are deeds, and the reflex of human greatness are the notes. Deeds overwhelm the heart and their reflexes capture the mind with that superior force by which the drama excels the lyric poem and nature outstrips the most eminent works of art. The lives of great men are leaves in the Bible of humanity, illustrated by that unexcelled master-painter whose name is Truth. In the panorama of every-day life, we observe the movement of figures, so closely akin to ourselves that they become uninteresting, and, finally, annoying and depressing. It is the vulgar curiosity-shop. In the Pantheon of those demi-gods who enacted the proudest scenes in the drama of man's history, we are brought face to face with man in his glory, and feel encouraged, cheered and elated with the exposition of what man could be and should be, and begin to feel that he was properly called "Creation's Lord," who exclaims "The world, the world is mine."

The stars are not of equal magnitude, density and brilliancy, nor are all great men equally great. Some are suns, others planets, and others again mere satellites. The suns, it appears, are most distant from us. We utilize in art antique models; in architecture we study ancient monuments; in style, prose or poetry, we imitate classical forms of by-gone days. We do precisely the same in philosophy and jurisprudence, in ethics and æsthetics, in religion and theology. We exhume ancient forms and formulas. We abstract the spirit of men and works of the past, and systematize that essence into standards by

which to measure the events and demands of the age, to regulate and to satisfy them. It is that which we call learning and practical wisdom, science and art.

However humiliating this may sound, it is nevertheless true. With the exception of the natural sciences, the mechanical arts, and whatever increases by the accumulation of human experience and experiment, objective observation and ocular demonstration, we are the pupils and heirs of the men of gray antiquity.

Those ancient men not only lived closer to the lap of benign and instructive nature than we do, but the themes of their thoughts were also more sublime than ours. They concentrated their energies upon themselves, and sought to solve the mysteries of human nature, which led them into the mysteries of existence, and so they elaborated the great themes of man, conscience, right, goodness, beauty, God, and man's relations to the Almighty. They were purely subjective, and the mind grew gigantic under the influence of ennobling and invigorating themes. In our phase of civilization, however, man has become objective, science is objective, invention is objective, the entire occupation of the man and the text-book of the lad are objective; the mind is absorbed in matter and its modifications; thought reaches not beyond that lower region, its themes are coarse and cold.

The old violin, upon which none but skilled artists played, can not be imitated by any artisan. It appears that the mellow notes, the sweet echoes of the *maestro's* charming melodies, are mysteriously retained in the dumb instrument. The beautiful melodies of moral and intellectual themes played upon the chords of the mind leave their sweet echoes in the human character. The violin improves not, because it records no vivifying melodies. We have not been able to duplicate Moses, Solomon and Isaiah, Plato and Aristotle, Homer and

Virgil, Cæsar and Marcus Aurelius. All we can, and in fact do, is to convert the inherited heavy gold coins into small change, and distribute it among the large masses of our fellow-men. assist and enable them to partake of the heritage of man.

If it is admitted that in all objective sciences and arts we are in advance of the ancients, and in all subjective sciences they were our superiors and masters, it must be equally admittd that they were grander characters, men and women more sublime and more powerful than we are. For it is by those very subjective treasures that the character is formed, the will invigorated, and that the energies are prompted and stimulated to great and glorious deeds, to sublime outpourings of immortal truth. We do yet catch fire from their fire and borrow light from their light. Hence when we speak of great men, to contemplate them as patterns of superior humanity, we speak of distant suns, the great men of antiquity, first and foremost.

Among the monuments of ancient genius the Bible occupies a prominent place on account of the sublimity of its themes, the depth and universality of its conceptions, the simplicity of its language and the exquisite beauty of human character which it presents to the mind in mighty, dramatical figures. It is certainly to the millions the most ennobling and most enlightening book they possess. It is greatness and goodness presenting themselves in life-size figures of charming features. It removes the veil from heaven's dome and permits the mortal to gaze into the mysteries of existence, the glory of the spirit. Again in that old Bible of the Hebrews one classical and colossal figure overtowers all the others. It looks like the giant cedar among the trees, like the snow-capped Baker among the Rocky Mountains, like the sun among the planets. This colossal, classical figure is the son of Amram and Jochebed—Moses, the "servant of Jehovah," the redeemer and legislator of Israel, the man who with his stylus of iron engraved upon

the rock of ages the duties and destinies of the human family, to which, as he said, nothing should be added, from which nothing should be taken away.

Permit me, ladies and gentlemen, to speak to you this evening of Moses. I think he is the grandest man of all known to fame in history. You must not think that I have selected this subject for this evening because it is maintained on the one hand that there was no Moses, and on the other hand that he is a mythical character, to whom posterity ascribed deeds, laws and institutions unknown to him and his cotemporaries. Assertions so unhistorical and unphilosophical, and altogether negative, could not well be made the subject of a lecture. I have selected Moses, because I think he was the greatest man of antiquity, and because I felt the desire to speak to you favorably of an old acquaintance and friend. I have first to say a few words on

THE MAN MOSES.

Whatever Grecian writers up to Josephus, the Rabbis and the Mohammedans reported of the life of Moses in addition to the Pentateuchal notices, has the value for the student of history, that from it he might learn how posterity exaggerates and ornaments the life of its heroes in default or even in spite of authentic history. Outside of the Pentateuchal notices we know nothing of Moses, his life or his character. And in the Pentateuch, or Five Books of Moses, the notices concerning the life of its master mind are very few and meager, as it is not intended to narrate what Moses did or suffered; it is rather intended to narrate what God did in Israel. Moses occupies so small a space in the Books of Moses that his authorship can hardly be doubted. If at a later period one or more men had written that work, he or they would certainly have glorified the redeemer, lawgiver, hero, statesman and father of his people, and depicted him in glowing oriental colors.

Again, among those brief notices there are certainly some of a later date. "The man Moses was very meek," posterity said of the same man, of whom it was said: "And Moses knew not that the skin of his face beamed"; and "There rose not in Israel again a prophet like Moses." These quotations were certainly written after the death of Moses, as in the first instance the term והאיש "And the man Moses" proves, for this was a title foreign to Moses in speaking of himself; and the two latter passages could not be true if the former was. If he was a meek man, he could not speak of his countenance beaming with glory and of his superiority as a prophet above all men in Israel. On the other hand, however, it must be admitted that the same kind of rational criteria which lead us to suspect the authenticity of some passages necessitate us to accept others as authentic. The object of the Pentateuch is certainly righteousness and holiness, the fear of God, the organization and government of society on strictly ethical principles. The author and compiler of such a book, without any worldly or personal interests in view, must not and can not be suspected of any willful falsehood; and it is a crime against human nature to raise such an accusation, unless irrefutable, historical or *a priori* arguments establish facts contrary to his allegations. He may exaggerate traditions, amplify and apostrophize in poetical effusion. He may canonize worldly deeds and surround common affairs with the halo of the miraculous, the aspect of the wonderful. He may, in glowing colors, depict the psychical subjective visions as real and objective actions and processes. But he can not and must not be suspected of willful falsehood. Consequently we have a legitimate canon of criticism to recognize the authentic passages, and it is to those to which we now turn.

We are told with the utmost brevity that Moses, born to Amram and Jochebed, in the time of oppression and servitude, was

doomed to die by the king's cruel mandate, but was rescued by a natural yet marvelous incident which gave him temporarily back to his mother and afforded him the golden opportunity to acquire an education at the royal court. This little chain of accidents, so necessary to make of the Hebrew infant the man Moses, is delineated with such sublime simplicity that the reader can not tell whether the writer intended to convey the idea that Providence so designed and executed it in order to make the infant Moses the redeemer and lawgiver, or whether he merely records the natural incidents by which the waif could become the powerful man. Aside from the delicate dramatic touches peeping through the narrow crevices of a mother's anguish and a sister's devotion, the whole story is too simple and natural to be doubted. If poetry it were, it would be much more complicated and ornate. If it had been written at any time after Moses, hosts of stars and angels, shepherds and kings, miracles and a host of supernatural demonstrations would have been called into requisition to furnish the proper frame for so important a picture as the birth of the redeemer and lawgiver.

Having thus been informed of the birth and first fate of Moses, the records are silent as to his education. We imagine that he was well instructed in all the arts and sciences of Egypt; and we imagine this by inference and interpretation only, for we have no direct information to this effect. It is certainly false to maintain that Moses was an Egyptian priest, since none besides the king, unless born of priestly parents, was ever admitted to that caste.

Moses appears again on the stage of life, not as the Egyptian commander and conqueror of Ethiopia, as the ancient legend has it, but when he had reached the age of maturity he went out to see his brethren in their state of abject servitude. Then and there he slew and buried a taskmaster who had smitten a Hebrew slave. All sapient moralists cry horror over that rash

deed, which they certainly would not do if John Brown had killed a Virginia taskmaster under similar circumstances. It was a rash act, perhaps unworthy of the lawgiver Moses, although it remains uncertain in the text whether the Egyptian taskmaster had not killed the Hebrew slave, as in both instances the same term (וַיַּךְ and מכה) is used. But it certainly was not so unworthy of the youthful patriot who, descending from the height of the royal court to his brethren in distress, felt so much more indignant and outraged by the taskmaster's brutal conduct. It was certainly a case of *strong provocation*, which, in the hands of Col. Robert Ingersoll before any criminal court, would constitute a successful plea to clear an ordinary assassin.

This incident, however, also shows that Moses, by his natural disposition, could tolerate no wrong; while another incident shows that he could not be an idle spectator where one was being perpetrated. When a fugitive in the wilderness, he witnessed how rude shepherds took advantage over their female companions at the well of water. He was on hand to protect that sheperdess, afterward his wife Zipporah, and her sisters. Here we have before us the fundamental traits of the character of a law-giver, courage and a predominant love of justice. The man of stern justice resents every wrong done to his fellow-creature; and such a man only can be a law-giver. Whoever commits a wrong, or sees others do it with impunity, can not become an apostle of justice. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I think on account of the truly chivalric conduct of Moses toward Lady Zipporah in the wilderness, his opponents ought to forgive him the "mistakes" he is supposed to have otherwise made. The other hostile party ought to be convinced that Moses was a living reality, for he went to the house of Jethro, married Zipporah, begat children and became a vulgar shepherd, all of which is decidedly unbecoming the hero of a myth. And the third party ought to feel

assured that these incidents were not penned down by an admirer of a later date; for he would certainly not have permitted that the distinguished "Servant of the Lord" should have married the daughter of an Arabian Sheikh, who was not of the house of Israel, and not circumcise his sons till his wife in rather an unkind manner reminded him of his duty, and heed the advice of his Heathen father-in-law in the important matter of provisional organization. A later writer, priest or prophet, would certainly have improved these incidents, especially in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, to whom intermarriage with Gentiles was an abomination. The fact that Moses, setting out on a foreign mission, took his wife and children with him, although she was but a plain shepherdess, and returned with them to Egypt, is proof positive that he was a good husband and father, in consideration of which the party of the first part ought to forgive him his other "mistakes."

It is unjust and unreasonable, to put it in the mildest form, to judge the character and career of a statesman and legislator of the prominence and eminence of Moses, by the ordinary standard applied to gauge the moral character of a man of the nineteenth century under ordinary circumstances. The worst "mistake" made by the fault-finders in this case is, that they can not see that extraordinary emergencies and circumstances, and the solution of extraordinary problems, such as the lawgiver in the wilderness was called upon to face and to solve, require that prudence, firmness and forbearance which only great and good men possess; regulations, measures and the momentary toleration of evils which under other circumstances might appear unjust and immoral. With Moses, however, all those alleged "mistakes" are counterpoised and by far overbalanced by his

UNSELFISHNESS AND HONESTY OF PURPOSE.

In the whole of his record Moses appears almost imper-

sonal. He assumes no titles, seeks no prerogatives and no emoluments for himself or his immediate posterity. He could stand up before his enemies in the Korah rebellion, and declare before God, "Not one ass of theirs have I taken." His sons were no officers, and inherited nothing, not even an extra portion of land in Canaan. His brother was given the priesthood, because he stood at the head of the people in Egypt as his collaborator in their redemption. His tribe was distinguished not on his account, but because those Levites proved faithful to the cause, when many rebelled and madly danced around the golden calf. He asked nothing for himself, not even a sepulcher, nothing in life, and nothing after death. The plain and meek "Servant of Jehovah" who might have been a king and a god, the founder of a dynasty and of gorgeous temples to perpetuate his glory, died on Mount Nebo, "And no man knoweth his grave to this day," his children disappear from his nation's chronicle, and a man of another tribe is his successor in office. Those who have made man and men their study must be well aware how rare and unique such unselfishness is, even among the greatest and best of the human race. Few, if any, have ever risen to that moral height that they said, "I wish all the people of Jehovah were prophets, and Jehovah would give his spirit upon them."

Moses lived for a cause, to which his life and energies were devoted with the utmost honesty of purpose, because he was entirely unselfish. He embraced it when he was a youth and a prince; adhered to it as a shepherd in the wilderness; embraced and pushed it to a successful issue under all the difficulties, dangers and storms in Egypt; never wavered, never doubted its final success under the horrors of the wilderness; the wild commotions of agitated multitudes, the frustration of his plans and hopes, the death of his comrades and fellow-sufferers about him, the waste of his years, and the approach of

his end, confirmed and sealed his unshaken faith in the grand cause to the last breath of his life.

The mice—you know the story of the mice that conspired one day to undermine the rock of Gibraltar; they gnawed and gnawed again with their little teeth until they were dead, and the rock is there yet, and is yet a rock. Exactly so do those appear to intelligent men whose petty business it is to find fault with Moses. Where are the men of that unselfishness and stern honesty of purpose? And yet this is the standard by which to measure the statesman and legislator's moral character, the amount of justice embodied in his laws, the unselfishness manifested in his actions, and the honesty of purpose characterizing his career. It is easier to die than to live one hundred and twenty years for a great cause under all the storms and miseries of life. It is a momentary inspiration, perhaps a periodical insanity, to die for a cause; it is a perpetual inspiration and resoluteness to live for it. No prophet has yet risen in Israel like Moses.

But we must not forget that Moses was of a sanguine temperament.

PASSIONATE, RASH AND IMPETUOUS.

He slew the Egyptian task-master in a fit of passion. He threw down and rashly broke the two tables of stone, the most precious gift he had to bestow on his people. Impetuously he smote repeatedly the dumb rock to cause it to pour forth its water, when he had been commanded to speak only, and he angrily addressed his own people and disciples, "Hear now, ye rebels."

In the most trying events recorded in the Pentateuch, which momentarily arrested the onward career of Moses and threatened to end it ignominiously, he proved the impetuosity of his passionate character. I refer to the sequences of the "golden calf" in the camp of Israel, the uproar in the camp after the

return of the spies from Canaan, and the revolt of Korah and his conspirators. In the first instance Moses saw the destruction of the base upon which he had reared the gorgeous structure of Israel's redemption and his elevation to the position of God's chosen people. He perceived the curse of Egyptian idolatry triumph again over that pure Monotheism, which was the objective point of his mission, his ardent labors, his cherished hopes, his faith and conviction. The whole work of a lifetime and the sole hope of Israel and mankind appeared to collapse like a bubble. He hurls from his arms the two tables of stone and breaks the most precious treasure he had to give; and he hears the voice of God telling him, "And now let me alone, that my anger wax hot against them, and I consume them, and make of thee a great nation." Consume—utterly annihilate at once—the poor, deluded multitude. How passionate! How rash and impetuous! In the second instance Moses perceives his great hope of organizing a people in the Holy Land to embody and realize, to promulgate and perpetuate the sublime principles of truth and human happiness, frustrated, crushed by the cowardice of petulant men. The returning spies had incensed the people to revolt; they refused to go up to Canaan and demanded to be led back into Egyptian slavery. The entire fabric of redemption was again at the point of destruction. Moses was angry—very angry—and he heard the voice of God saying, "How long shall this people provoke me? and how long yet will they not believe in me, with all the signs which I have shown in the midst of them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and root them out, and I will make of thee a nation greater and mightier than they." And the third instance was perhaps no less threatening than the two former, when Korah and his conspirators revolted and attempted to overthrow both the polity and policy of the growing Theocracy; and also in in this case Moses hears God saying: "Separate yourselves

from the midst of this congregation, and I will make an end of them in a moment."

In his glowing wrath, under the first impression and violent uproar of his passions, Moses imagined that destruction, utter annihilation of the rebellious people was God's justice in those various cases. The people hopelessly degenerated, he rashly opined, was unfit to realize and actualize the sublime scheme of salvation, of which he was the harbinger and expounder. In all these cases, however, Moses prays vehemently, supplicates like a father for his children in danger of death, and God forgives, is reconciled to the people, and the threatened evil is obviated. Take all those narratives literally, and God is represented as the angry despot, ready to crush and annihilate his poor, frail and deluded children, while Moses appears as the most merciful, the benign and long-suffering father of Israel, who saves them by his ardent entreaties. All this is contrary to the theology and moral system of Moses laid down in the same Pentateuch. Take those narratives in their correct sense, understand all the dialogues between God and Moses from the psychological standpoint as *subjective*, and not as *objective* incidents, as ideal, and not as real facts, and those events teach how passionate, impetuous, rash and reckless Moses was, so that his first impressions under those circumstances were horrid, terrible, reckless, destructive, and yet they appeared to him just, and becoming the eternal God of justice. But at the same time those very events suggest what the second sober thought of Moses must have been. They show how powerful his reason and conscience were, to master, to overcome and bridle his mighty passion, and to direct him to the right and good, the just and true.

Great men have mighty passions. One efficient cause of their greatness is the superior power of their passion. "He who is greater than his neighbor is of mightier passion," said

an ancient sage. Great deeds rise first and foremost from the pressure of excited and ignited passion. Cool, frigid, little men may be cunning, devising and calculating heads, but they will never perform great, heroic and pre-eminent feats, to move and inspire large masses, to benefit and elevate inert multitudes. If those mighty passions are unbridled, they lead to acts of barbarity, violence, cruelty, reckless fury, and end frequently in self-destruction. But where the reason and conscience of the man, as was evidently the case with Moses, are stronger than the mighty passions, to control and govern them, to direct and apply them to great and good deeds, to the elevation and salvation of man; there you find the great man, and there only. His passions must be mighty, his first impressions violent, but his reason and conscience must be so much mightier, and his second sober thought correct, benign, just and wise. This was the case with Moses, and this completes the picture of his moral character. If Thomas Carlyle had written a biography of Moses, he would have summed it up somewhat to this effect: This man's intellect was so powerful that his moral principles were so correct and his deeds so enormous; and this would be correct under all ordinary circumstances, but Moses is an extraordinary phenomenon in the history of man. "Moses is the most exalted personality in the oldest history," says the historian L. von Ranke (*Weltgeschichte* I., 1 *Leite* 42). Ordinary causes are inadequate to produce extraordinary effects. Neither the gigantic intellect and the powerful passions, nor the most intense love of liberty and justice will account for the extraordinary and unique character, work and legislation of Moses. Think of a man who was educated at a royal court, spending the greater part of his life as an obscure shepherd in the wilderness without relinquishing the great object of his life, the redemption of his people from bondage, and establishing a model nation on the principles of monotheism,

moral law, freedom, justice and equality, when all around the world was submerged in polytheism, slavery and incest. Had he ever abandoned that object, he could not have beheld the vision of the burning bush, nor could he have understood its import. Think of a man who appeared with his staff before a mighty king and court to demand in the name of the unknown God the liberation of hundreds of thousands of slaves, and not only unaided by the natural means of accomplishing such a radical revolution, but even against the will of the liberated masses carries his point, leads an entire people out of its native land into a howling desert and overcomes Pharaoh with all his power to the bitter end of the mighty antagonist's death. All the miracles recorded in the Pentateuch as such are not as wonderful and astounding as is this simple fact, which none can deny. A nation was born, a free people was organized out of a horde of slaves, notwithstanding the relentless opposition of the then greatest power on earth. Think furthermore of the man's organizing and governing talent as displayed in the camp in the wilderness, its marches and its rest, an organizing mastership which astounded even the heathen prophet Balaam and caused him to bless where he was called to curse. Think of the man's patience, forbearance and unshaken consistency, in the wilderness, when he saw his projects frustrated and his hopes blighted, his comrades perish and his end approaching. Think of all that and the distressing details thereof, and explain it by natural causes, if you can. There is a mystery at the bottom of this character without precedent or parallel in history, and this mystery is the powerful conviction of Moses that he was in possession of truth, the whole truth, the deathless, everlastig truth; and his unshaken faith in the majestic power of truth, to which everything must yield; his conviction and faith that he was the servant of God, the inspired messenger of the Most High, the man of destiny, the apostle of Prov-

idence. This solves the mystery, and nothing else can. Whatever one might believe in regard to Providence, miracles, inspiration, revelation and kindred conceptions, there is one point that all must admit, and that is that Moses verily believed and trusted in the only true God and Providence, and that he verily believed he was inspired and commissioned by the one and true God to say and to do that which he did say and do. He was so sure of his office, dignity and destiny that he was not jealous when Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, and in the hour of distress he could address his God thus: "Behold, thou hast said unto me, bring up this people and thou hast not made known to me him whom thou wouldst send with me, and thou hast said, I have distinguished thee (known thee) thy name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight."

The power of this conviction and the might of his faith, which make the basis of his character, complete the faint outlines we are able to draw of the man Moses, of whom it is reported in holy writ God said: "My servant Moses is authenticated in all my house" (בכל ביתי נאמן הוא), the authorized expert in the entire moral household of Providence. This point however, leads us directly into another division of this humble essay, namely, into

THE WORK DONE BY MOSES.

The historian mentioned above says furthermore, "The idea of the extra-mundane and intellectual God was conceived by Moses and, so to say, incorporated in the people which he organized and led. The incarnation can not be accomplished in the infinite purity of the idea, still it radiates from everything which the legislator ordained, and one might say that he was the Pedagogue of his people which he organized." This is the voice of impartial history. All the quibbling of theology, that of Kuenen and Wellhausen included, can not change it. The scoffing of petulant humorists, with the laughter and applause

of inconsiderate masses, can not impair it. History is history in spite of all quibblings, humorisms and burlesques. Moses left to posterity in the Five Books a five-act drama, in grandeur unapproachable, in sublimity insurpassable, in beauty incomparable beyond the poet's loftiest flight of imagination, incarnating the greatest subject ever thought of by man, the birth and organization of a free and sanctified nation, the birth and triumph of Heaven's truth and benignity, Seraphic light and Shekinah glory upon this earth with its darkness, slavery and incest. Moses was the greatest of all master artists. Painters and sculptors failed to exhaust the grand characters and sceneries produced by that creative genius. He was himself the greatest of all known sculptors, and left to posterity that colossal and imperishable statue, hewn from the solid rock of truth, inscribed with the weal and woe of all ages and generations; the pedestal is the habitable earth, its head reaches heaven's dome, its forms are gigantic; and the name of that inimitable colossus is *Israel*, the immortal, eternal nation with the beauty of God's chosen people.

MOSES AS A REFORMER.

Altogether too high-flying, too top-lofty, too poetical, too emphatic and enthusiastic without sufficient cause, says our very critically inclined friend, who has collected and systematized pins enough to sting you and fasten on you the posters of all theaters and circuses; too much for one man, says he, for Moses was after all a mere reformer. He found one piece of his laws here and another piece there; he took a patch from Egypt, others from Asiatic nations and made of it the patch-work comfort which you call the Law of Moses. Hold on, my friend, let us see about that.

In regard to culte, the sacrificial polity, the Levitical priesthood and Levitical laws of cleanness and diet, judicial and social laws and institutions, especially marital laws, polygamy,

slavery, the institution of the avenger of blood, and kindred topics, he was a mere reformer. The laws and customs which the Hebrews had adopted of the Egyptians, or developed in their own social and political life in Goshen, like the division into twelve tribes and the government by the first-born and elders, and whatever they had inherited of the Patriarchs, and by them probably of the Chaldees and Assyrians, could in the main be adopted and reformed only to harmonize them with the Mosaic Monotheism and the necessary sequents of that Monotheism. So far, it is correct to speak of Moses as a reformer, who learned of the Egyptians, the Chaldees and others. This adoption and adaptation, however, only proves two points, —in the first place, that the laws and institutions, as we find them in the Pentateuch, were given for and to a people coming directly from Egypt, with the laws, customs and institutions of that ancient country; in the second place, this proves the wisdom and impartiality, as well as the prudence, of Moses. Whatever was good and useful in the traditions of his people or the laws and customs of the Egyptians, and congenial to his system, he adopted and sanctioned. Whatever wrong was too strong to be eradicated at once, like polygamy, slavery, animal sacrifices and similar inherited evils, he surrounded with modifying laws, leading to their gradual abolition and eradication. Still, everything was bent and cut and changed to bear the impress of his spirit, the criteria of his system, and the luster of Monotheism—the Living God of Israel and the Sinaic principle. As a reformer, it must be admitted that he was wise enough to understand that no man can commence an entirely new history, and none can overcome at once all evils. History and the *statu quo* exert their rights under all circumstances. However, Moses was by no means a mere reformer; he was much more,

A WISE AND JUST LEGISLATOR.

When you sift the question down to the system—to those sublime and universal principles which, with the Mosaic dispensation, opened the new era of man's history, the reign of spirit and freedom and the superiority of holiness and love as it now predominates more or less in the religious, social and political conceptions of the entire civilized world—it is utterly false to call Moses a reformer. The Mosaic dispensation can only be called the spiritual creation of a lofty genius or the gracious gift of revelation; hence, Moses was either the "Servant of the Lord," or the divinely-gifted genius, which terms may be synonymous. For "to behold the similitude of God," and to be spoken to by him "face to face," is perhaps identical with the most perfect conceptions of the loftiest genius, engaged with the holiest and most sublime themes.

Take a cursory survey of the Mosaic dispensation, and you will find this: God, or rather the ineffable Jehovah, is the password which leads you through the entire sanctum to the very sanctum sanctorum of the whole Mosaic system of doctrine and law. It is supposed, indeed, that Monotheism was the oldest groundwork of religion, which gradually degenerated into polytheism and idolatry. The Bible admits this, and documentary evidence to a certain degree supports it. Upon this alleged fact is based the theory that Moses adopted the Monotheism of the Egyptian priests, or also the Jews adopted it from the eastern nations, from the Arians even, as some ingenious archæologists add. The one theory, or rather hypothesis, is as good as the other. The Monotheism of Moses differs from that discovered under the debris and rubbish of huge, smashed and crushed idols, under the ruins and fragments of temples and altars strewn with the bleached bones of human victims, and in the myths and legends of bewildered

minds, as the sun differs from the candle light. The idea of spirit and spirituality, hence of freedom and holiness, is a nonentity in all ancient mythology, theogony and theodicy, so that the very idea of a controlling intellect in nature (*Nous*, the shaping spirit) was unknown to the Pagan world prior to Anaxagoras, in the fourth pre-Christian century. The god of the ancient nations was an abstraction of concrete nature in its totality, materialistic and fatalistic, and the gods were fractions thereof, abstractions of natural forces and energies, personified in celestial bodies by Zabaites, in natural objects by Feticists, in defunct men and women in Olympus, among the advanced Pagans, without the least similarity to the Living God of Israel.

The Monotheism of Moses, symbolized in the term Jehovah, is the expression of the all-producing, all-pervading, all controlling, all-possessing, self-conscious and all-knowing, infinite, free and almighty spirit, revealed in the material universe which does not contain him, and reflected in human reason, which can not comprehend him, omnipresent in nature and history without being absorbed therein. The Living God of Israel as Moses taught him is substance, and no mere abstraction. He is life and love, reason and freedom, the will and the power, and no symbol of concrete, dead and cold matter, with its iron necessity and fatalism. He is God, the absolute and necessary existence, and all nature has relative existence only, and is the mere reflex of his wisdom, power, goodness and holiness. This is the Mosaic Monotheism which, besides the elements thereof inherited of the patriarchs, is as original and unique as reason itself. Moses alone could fully comprehend this immense revelation, as genius only fully comprehends its own mighty creations. We understand thereof only that which loboring talent is permitted to grasp of the production of genius, much or little, never in its completeness, fullness and unity.

This is the key to the Mosaic dispensation and legislation,

minus the heritage and the circumstances to which the leading principles had to be accommodated for the time being. In the light of that Monotheism the material universe appeared to be the work of the Great Architect, an organic cosmos, with plan, design, ultimate end, and all things therein co-ordinate and subordinate; and this is the foundation of all science.

Man being the image of God, a reflex of the universal intellect, will and love, rose from his insignificance to which Paganism had degraded him to the lofty position of creation's ultimate end, God's representative on earth, a free, moral and intellectual agent. This is the first derivative of that sublime principle of Monotheism: Man is godlike and free. This is the postulate of Moses, upon which rises his system of ethics with freedom and equality at the base, the preservation and happiness of the human race at its apex. "Ye shall be a kingdom of priests," he announced to his people—every one a priest, every person one of the highest class and caste—none to be superior and none inferior before God and His laws—one law and one statute to be for all, the native and the alien. This announcement of equality was as new and original with Moses as his proclamation of liberty, of Sabbath-year and Jubilee-year. It was the inevitable sequent of his Monotheism.

In Egypt, as in India and elsewhere, society was broken up into castes and clans, which domineered the one over the other, and slavery was the lot of all, as the gods themselves were the slaves of blind and relentless fate and iron necessity. The chief of a Pagan nation was a god or demi-god, whom every person must obey under penalty of death. The chief of the Mosaic government is the prophet, to whose teachings and advices every person was commanded to listen; but none could be punished by human authority for non-obedience to the prophet. The law governs, and man can only expound and administer it. Theocracy is identical with democracy, and

democracy means equality before the law and the sovereignty thereof. The law is divine, it is God's, who alone is King, *i. e.*, it must emanate from unadulterated reason and the principle of absolute justice. Therefore, it must exclude none and embrace and protect all who live among you and seek prosperity and happiness with you. This is the groundwork of the Mosaic ethics, flowing naturally from the divine fountain of his Monotheism.

Embraced therein is the moral law which must govern the individual. The God of Moses is holy, and that is again originally Mosaic. The gods of Paganism were sensuous and sensual beings, to whom neither purity nor virtue, neither righteousness nor holiness, neither spiritual love nor intellectual enjoyment was attributed. The debauchery and violence of the gods were admired by immoral men and glorified by lubric poets. The Most Holy One, according to the Mosaic dispensation, promised his chosen people that they should become to him a peculiar treasure, "a holy nation," and commanded them, "Ye shall be holy men unto me"; "Ye shall be holy, for I, Jehovah your God, am holy"; "And ye shall sanctify yourselves and be holy," etc. God must be worshiped in righteousness and holiness.

Man's happiness and the perfection of his nature depend on the purity of his motives and the righteousness of his doings. Like God, man must learn to love the true, the good and the beautiful for their own sake, and abhor falsehood and wickedness and impurity as being abominable in themselves. So man lives godlike. Religion based upon falsehood is superstition, and superstition is the progenitor of fanaticism, injustice and impurity. As you forsake God, so will he forsake you; as you desert truth and reason, so will they abandon you. No man can worship God and feast with the devil. But the Pagans did. Religion and morals were with them two different

factors. Morals appeared to them a social compact and political necessity. The most pious among them was no better by his religion than the most frivolous. The idea of holiness as a form of religious worship is of Mosaic origin, a necessary sequent of his sublime Monotheism.

If you cast a glance upon the entire Mosaic legislation as the prophets understood and expounded it, you will find these fundamental thoughts at the bottom of every group and every detail thereof. Dietary laws and the laws of lustration and purification are in the first place sanitary laws, surrounded with symbolic signification of inner and spiritual holiness. Take care of the exhausted and the wounded, is a splendid martial law. Take care of the poor, the needy, the stranger, the widow and the orphan, said Moses, and his poor laws are without parallel in the laws of nations. They stand above all similar laws and doctrines of antiquity, inasmuch as with Moses they are means of worship and holiness, means of atonement and redemption, aye, the release of the soul out of the bonds of selfishness, avarice and hardness of heart; the worship of God through returning gratefully to him, through the poor or the altar, parts of the profuse gifts which he bestows upon his children; and gratefulness is one of the most eminent virtues. Learn to make sacrifices in order to overcome your greediness and your undue attachment to the dust of this earth; but let your sacrifices be to God for holiness and to man for goodness, for the preservation and happiness of the race. In peace, "Love thy neighbor as thyself"; "And ye shall love the stranger," *i. e.*, you shall love man, he is God's child and image. In war, slay not the defenseless, make not war upon those who offer you peace and submission, protect female chastity against violence; destroy no property wantonly, destroy no fruit tree when you besiege an enemy's city, and force none of your brethren to go to war if he objects to it. Let the law

govern, and not the violence of passions; no *Lynch* law, let the courts decide and the bailiffs execute, have cities of refuge to protect the manslayer, take cognizance of the innocent blood shed in your land and take no ransom of the assassin. Take him even from my altar to put him to death. Be just, fair and upright in all your doings and dealings.—To what end? To be holy, to do the will of your God, to preserve intact the human race according to God's covenant with man, to secure happiness to man and holiness to yourselves. So the whole Mosaic dispensation and legislation arise from his Monotheism, as rises the beautiful tree with all its branches, leaves, blossoms and fruit from its roots, as heat and light emanate from the sun. In order to correctly understand Moses as a legislator, and to comprehend him fully as a man, one must study, first and foremost, his theology, his Monotheism, for it is truly his, and the foundation of his character and dispensation.

No, I am not going to review that whole magnificent structure of religion, law and ethics in so short a time as is allotted to me. It is too vast, to grand, too sublime, too lofty a mountain of truth and justice to be surveyed in so short a time. The loftiest genius of antiquity can not be measured in one hour. You have before your mind the author of the great principle that the governments and religions of nations must be built upon the same rock of truth which must be the postulate of individual character. There can be no two kinds of ethics, one for the nation and another for the individual; no two kinds of religion, one to please God and another to advance prosperity and happiness among men; no two kinds of human beings, the chosen ones and the pariahs, before God and man; there is but one God, and one truth, and one justice, and one human family, every individual of which is God's own child. You have before you the organon of revelation: For Moses informs you: Not I, but your God, has spoken to you, and

announced to you the decrees of heaven, the duties and hopes of man. Not I, Moses, he says, but the Almighty himself, has taught you the highest and surest standard of rectitude to guide you safely to prosperity, happiness, immortality and eternal bliss; to erect upon it the government to protect you and the religion to elevate you. Not I, Moses, but the Almighty himself, has revealed to you the universal dominion of truth and justice, of freedom and love; his benign Providence watching over all and each of you; his mercy and forbearence with your weakness and shortcomings; his will that you, all of you, be holy, happy, immortal and for ever blessed. On all those grand precepts and principles and under the guidance of the same God, I legislate for you and build up for you a structure of free government and a temple of imperishable religion; I am the mere servant and messenger of Jehovah, who is your God and your Father. So did Moses speak, and so did he act. He built up the chosen people, the ideal nation, the eternal nation which is and exists with a land and without it, with a government and without one, in prosperity and adversity; the people which has seen the rise, decline and fall of all ancient empires, stood at the cradle of all modern nations and powers, groped its way through the darkness of the Middle Ages; and at the very first dawn of liberty and justice among the nations, it rose again with vigor and energy to demonstrate its vitality and its ability to co-operate in the solution of the new problems of resurrecting humanity.

Standing before Moses you stand before the man who has given law and religion to the civilized world; whose standard of right and justice is fast becoming the world's beacon light and guiding star; whose doctrines of religion, of God, human dignity, freedom and righteousness conquer the masses, captivate the reasoners, enlighten and humanize the millions. Once the mighty peals of thunder roared upon Sinai, overwhelmed

by the sounds of the trumpets and cornets, and above all roaring and thundering resounded the word and law of God shaking the wilderness and re-echoing from Paran and Seir. Louder and mightier yet resounded that one great and powerful word of the Almighty, which was freedom! freedom! freedom! Freedom it resounded from Sinai, mind is free, the spirit is free, man is free, Jehovah is the God of freedom; and now it rolls and re-echoes from ocean to ocean the mind is free, the spirit is free, man is free, crush the yoke, break the shackles, man is free.

Standing before Moses you face the first declaration of independence, the first proclamation of liberty, the first and eternal blast from the trumpet of freedom, the redemption of the spirit, the elevation of reason to its sovereign rights, you stand before the majesty of righteousness, of purity and virtue, face to face with the sovereignty of truth, the glory of holiness, and the divine excellence of human nature.

Was Moses a statesman, a lawgiver, a teacher of righteousness and a servant of Jehovah? The civilized world testifies that he was. Was Moses a reality, an incomparable truth? What poets can not imitate, the loftiest genius can not duplicate, no nation and no nations have reproduced, must be the reality of truth. Moses was the grand architect of that gorgeous palace which the prophets and bards frescoed, around which the sages built the fence and park and colonnades, and the reasoners lit the lamps upon the meandering, winding avenues and approaches to the lofty portals.

WAS MOSES A GREAT MAN?

It sometimes appears to me as if Moses were still standing upon the pinnacle of Mount Sinai, high above the mists of this earth, enveloped in the benign light of divine truth, surrounded by the seraphs of light and purity, pointing heavenward and looking onward and forward to the family of man, and he ap-

pears to me as inviting all nations to rise and to climb up to that glory-crowned height of righteousness, purity and holiness, liberty and equality, justice and peace on earth in the name of the One Eternal God and in behalf of the one and indivisible human family; a summit, alas! which the human family, in spite of all combustions and revolutions, all the struggles and the precious blood shed, has not yet reached. Then I appear to myself very small, very insignificant, all persons and things appear small and insignificant to me, and I feel compelled to think that either God spoke through the mouth of Moses or nature's productive energy was exhausted in the great mind of that one man, who comprehended the entire household of God on this earth, and opened its mysterious avenues to the gaze of man. He who has legislated in the Wilderness for the nations of so many centuries, and has established the only immortal nation; he who taught us God, freedom, equality, righteousness, purity, humanity and holiness, was certainly a great and good man and a most extraordinary reformer.

UNIV. OF CALIF. LIBRARY, LOS ANGELES

University of California Library
Los Angeles
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

[illegible] Knowals
310/825-9188

JAN 13 2003

REC'D YRL DEC 10 2002

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 075 489 5

Univers
Soutl
Libr